1: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
MA11 Kurd MA11

The country houses of the Kūrds are for the most part—like those of their neighbours, the Armenians, already described—underground dwellings, with the cattle-stable communicating with the *selamlik*, or public-room. The cooking stove consists of an immense earthen jar, wider in the centre than at the top and bottom, which is sunk into the floor of the principal room. Into it a quantity of *tezek*, the native fuel of compressed straw and cow-dung, is thrown, and from an iron bar placed across the orifice a kettle is suspended by a chain. Over this stove the women sit, regardless of the smoke and flame issuing from the ground as from the crater of a volcano. The smoke finds its only exit by the little window high up in the wall, which admits the small modicum of light with which the inmates content themselves.

The furniture is very simple, being merely a few carpets and quilts, some mattresses, and a number of leather wallets, which contain the wearing apparel and other household goods not in general use. This apartment serves as kitchen, sitting- and sleeping-room combined, three or four generations finding rest and comfort within its four walls. Out of this room opens the store-room, which contains a cemented cistern, like an ancient sarcophagus in shape, and a number of earthen jars of different sizes, the largest quite four feet high, in shape like the Greek *amphora*. The cistern is used for making a kind of beer called *bóza*, a liquor called *nardenk*, extracted from the juice of the pomegranate, and other provisions for domestic

little collection of arms--rifles, bandoliers, khunjirs (the curved Kurdish dagger)--may often be seen, because men with business in the serai are disarmed on entering and may reclaim their weapons after their departure. The roofs are of earth thickly plastered and rolled on supporting joists of bundled poles and twigs, and on them tufts of grass have found a foothold. In summer the policemen on duty at night take up their station in a corner of the roof.

The offices of the serai open on the inner courtyard. There are but a few loopholes in the outer wall of the first storey, and the interior windows and those of the second storey facing the valley are glassed and barred. The walls within are plastered, but the ceiling consists of bare branches and poles which support the roof. The floors are of tamped earth. The furniture--desks, chairs, and long, high wooden benches--is unpainted, while a few offices boast upholstered easy-chairs. Cases, desks, and convenient corners are occupied with stacks of dossiers and loosely-pinned papers. Everything is written by hand, for there are no typewriters. In the corner of every office stands the omnipresent grey water-jug with a glass turned down over its mouth. There is no electric lighting, and the rare work which demands attention after dark must be done by kerosene or gasoline lanterns. A few of the rooms are equipped with stoves in wintertime. Directly across the courtyard from the gateway is the jail, its inner wall

342

a hillside, the roofs of the lower tiers serving as porches for those above. The population of this community [162] was estimated at about 150 adults. The individual house is simple, its floor of tamped earth, its windows without glass, no provision made for the escape of smoke from an [354] indoor firepit save doors and windows, and its furnishings [312] meager. Water is obtained from a neighboring stream. This 366 village boasts no specialized constructions and is without shops. Larger villages, such as Batas or Dyana, have a number of buildings for special purposes, for example, [344] [346] the police post and the Nestorian church in Dyana, and a definite mercantile section. Fields as well as house-yards 417 of the villagers are often marked out with extensive fences of interlaced branches and thorns or of rubble. In the 231 smaller village described above, cattle and other domestic 342 animals were housed within the dwellings themselves during cold weather, and in some locales in the area caves are used as cattle-pens or sheep-folds in the winter. 361 The "agglomerated" village pattern of rural occupation in the Middle East and in Southern Europe has been noticed often, but in the Rowanduz district it is possible to find isolated farm settlements of no more than one or two houses. 342 The kotchir, who do not winter in the area, use for shelter a black goat-hair tent floored with rugs, in general appearance not unlike that of Arab nomads, but less complex. Some of these tents, such as those used by chieftains for summer guest-houses, are quite spacious and of unique designs.

diced and moulded about a metal skewer (kabab) or alter- 252
nated in whole pieces of flesh and fat upon the same 265
implement (tika). A charcoal fire is prepared in a [354]
rectangular metal brazier and brought to a bed of glowing
coals with a wicker fan. The skewers are placed over
this fire, and turned, with continuous fanning of the blaze,
until the meat is done. The grilled product is largely 265
sold by order to private homes, but some may be used in 437
the restaurant and still other offered to customers in a
chaykhana. As with the butcher, one must place a request
on the day preceding, for after noontime the kababchi has
often exhausted his supply of meat. The name of this [578]
occupation can be used in insult, and has much the same
meaning and strength as "chimney-sweep" in England of a
hundred years ago.

One of the most important items in the diet of the 256
townspeople is bread, and a huge quantity is baked daily, [262]
both by professionals and housewives. In addition to the
men who are bakers by profession, there are a number of
women who prepare a surplus beyond their needs at home
which is peddled about the town. The usual sales technique [443]
involves equipping the children of the house, either of [857]
baker or of housewife, with basketfuls and dispatching them
from shop to shop in the bazar and from house to house in
the town. The flour, purchased from merchants or mill- [415]
owners, is a coarsely-ground, greyish product, and, with
the addition of water, is kneaded into dough in a huge,
flat bottomed tub.

flat-bottomed metal tub. The oven, made of fire-hardened clay, is a large beehive-shaped affair with its round, open mouth close to the top and the draught so arranged that the fire below is extremely hot and smokeless. When the oven is heated, the flat unleavened cakes are slapped against the inner wall of the oven near its mouth and plucked off when they are done. Even though baked one at a time, the intense heat of the oven permits the production of a great number of cakes in a relatively short period of time. The resulting product is a round, greyish-brown cake about eight inches in diameter and a half inch in thickness. As with other peoples of the Middle East, bread or nan is treated with almost religious reverence, and to maltreat it, for example, to throw it away, is regarded as the incredible abuse of a blessing.[1] Discovering this, some of the British troops stationed in Iraq used to bait their servants by kicking crusts about their messroom floor. In Rowanduz, it is customary when a man spies a fragment of bread on the ground that he pick it up, kiss it, press it to his forehead, and place it on a wall or some other spot "for the poor," a usage which was observed in the streets several times.

The hotel, khan or qarvansara, is reached through a narrow entryway between two shops near the restaurant. It is a peculiarly shaped structure, apparently built up

[1]Some idea of this is to be seen in the Egyptian colloquial word for bread, 'aysh, which in literary Arabic and in other dialects means "life".

house has a fresh mountain spring running through it, vigorously refused to drink the water of Rowanduz, asserting it was "dirty" and made him ill. Because many of the channels are open, numerous things can get in the water, to name a few, dogs, chickens, infants, and refuse, as it courses downward, and the townspeople are cognizant of the fact. In the larger households the interior basins and water jars are filled just before daybreak when the water, after a night of running, is thought to be purer, and the women of poorer homes carry their water at the same time. "The higher in the town, the better the water," it is said, although this in no way seems to operate to condition the price of land.

The houses of the poorer townspeople are to be found clustered on the cheaper land of the residential upper town. While some are two-storey apartment buildings housing several families, the characteristic form is a small, rectangular mud-brick building of a single room with a rolled mud roof. The floor is of earth, the walls and ceiling unfinished, and the windows, if there are any, small, open loopholes in the walls. In lieu of a wooden door, a hanging of coarse cloth or blanketing may be used in winter. Cooking surrounds an earthen fire-pit in one corner, or, in fair weather, has a place just outside the door, but the diet of the poor does not require complex preparation. The furnishings of these homes are the meagerest: a few mats, a collection of tattered blankets and quilts from which the beds are made on the floor, a

a closet or booth, usually on the first floor of the house, with a door, as in the case of the bath, of wooden planks or a cloth hanging. This booth contains little more than a slit trench, perpendicular to the entrance, leading down into the foundations of the house and ultimately outside, and a metal ewer, a long-necked vessel with a capacity of about a pint, containing water. The left hand is used for cleansing, and, while never so stringently abhorred as among certain Arab groups, it is considered impolite to use it in formal dining, save in tearing apart food, although everyday practice admits considerable latitude.

Interior lighting is furnished by fuel lamps. Before the first World War, a kerosene lantern, described as "Hungarian," was in use, imported together with its fuel from Russia through Iran. Since that time, a new and brighter type of lamp, making use of gasoline put under pressure by an attached pneumatic pumping device, has come into use in the wealthier homes. In a number of the poorer houses a small, simple oil lamp, which provides only a feeble glow, is utilized as an occasional night light. Save during Ramadan, when one or two meals are taken during the evening, most of the houses are completely darkened soon after nightfall. Heating during winter does not receive systematic attention, although the wealthy make use of kerosene stoves. The general remedy is to don additional clothing. The larger houses have a woodpile,

faggots supplied by the villagers, in their courtyard, but they are used as fuel for the kitchen rather than to obtain household warmth, and incidentally serve at night as roosts for the chickens. 354 372 [231]

Of the rooms of the house, those used for sleeping might be considered first, which also serve as apartments for the women, although there is nothing approaching the Ottoman notion of a harim with its guarded entrance and separate domestic facilities. These sleeping rooms have rectangular niches, several feet off the floor, cut into the outer walls whose thickness can accommodate them, which house the brightly-painted chests containing the clothing and goods of the house. A few niches may hold trinkets, mirrors, photographs, and the like. A number of the households have wooden or iron bedsteads in the European style, the latter imported from Erbil, but the greater part use wool or cotton mattresses spread directly on the floor with a bed of blankets and quilts made up on them. A variety of pillows and bolsters are in use, not only in these rooms, but elsewhere in the home. During the day the mattresses and their coverings are rolled up against the walls and serve as couches for those occupying the room. They may be unrolled after the noon meal for the short rest taken by many at this time. The floor itself is covered with mats, products of southern Iraq, or carpets, some of the latter beautiful examples of Iranian weaving. Other furniture, chairs or stools, is not uncommon, but is also 353 352 513 352 513 352

but found just as strongly in the illiterate Sa'idi peasant of contemporary Egypt as in a Medieval Persian poet. In Rowanduz all of the wealthier homes have their gardens, surrounded by high fences, with a number of trees, willows and those bearing fruit, for shade, and, if there are servants to cultivate them, some plots of vegetables off to one side. In summer it is customary to set out a number of wooden benches and chairs, and guests can be entertained with the addition of freshly-picked fruits to the usual beverages. By popular admission, the most spectacular garden near Rowanduz is that of Hajji Muhammad 'Ali Agha of Jindian, whose house is built over the course of an icy mountain spring. This stream flows in a masonry channel through the plot itself. The agha boasts fruits chilled in the water and the pleasant sound of the swiftly running brook together with the usual shade trees, carpets, and benches. Gardens are seasonally used to a much greater extent by the family as a whole than the guest-room, and children of the house, in addition to playing there, are held responsible for keeping birds and stray goats from the ripening fruits and vegetables. It follows that the youngsters, as might be expected, make much greater inroads on the produce than those they are set to guard against.

Aside from a few rooms devoted to storage, as of firewood, it remains to take account of the kitchen, always to be found on the first floor and more or less open to the courtyard, inasmuch as chimneys are unknown or

342
354
unused in the town. Cooking, particularly of grilled meats, can produce a great quantity of smoke, and even in the houses of the wealthy certain recipes are prepared in the yard. The kitchen itself is typically a bare room containing as permanent fixtures the large, beehive oven and a fire-pit or hearth beside it. As will be 354
appreciated from the description of the diet, the type of 252
fire employed, of which there are several, depends upon the dish. The oven is used for baking, the fire-pit for heating larger vessels, the charcoal brazier for broiling, and the brass kerosene burner, one of the most widespread intrusions into Kurdish life in recent decades, for a large number of smaller tasks. These last, manufactured in [439]
Sweden or Germany and purchased from the merchants, are diminutive stoves, the legs of which support the fuel tank, bending above it over the burner to form a platform, and use kerosene under mechanically induced pressure, as in the gasoline lamps. Boiling water, warming food, preparing tea or coffee, and a dozen other lesser jobs are accomplished with these devices, and even the poorer townspeople boast of their possession. There is a heterogeneous 415
collection of metal cooking utensils, ranging from the wide, flat-bottomed tub in which dough is kneaded to tin bowls and cups. Niches in the walls are used for their storage, as well as the dishes in everyday use, those not too prized to be guarded among the treasures of the wife or displayed in the guest-room. Imperishable food, flour, sugar, tea, 251
and the like, is kept in containers in the kitchen or a

269 on a sheet of bread and grassed. Spoons were sometimes used to eat from stone bowls[68], but forks
262 and knives were not used[69]. Pieces of bread were used to eat with in addition to being consumed as
[412] food. The beverage drunk is *mâstâw* or the less-distinguished *dûgh*. These are drunk from glasses if
[397] not drunk with a ladle from a common circulating bowl. Hands are washed before and after the meal.
[515] Water from a jug is poured over them down into a circular basin. After the meal the mouth is rinsed and cleaned.

---

312 *Fetching of water.* Water is transported to the house by women in containers of various kinds:
415 clay jars about 0.40 m. high with a handle on the one side (E. 2259), home-manufactured and slightly
482 burnt, or rectangular petrol cans with an opening at the top on one side. Both are carried on the left
462 shoulder and supported by a raised right arm: there are also water skins, *kawl*, made out of whole, tanned sheep or goatskins either carried across the woman's loins and held in place by the arms, or on the back in a big shawl, the ends of which are tied round the woman's chest. When a filled water skin of this type is to be placed on the back, the woman first places the shawl on the ground, then the water skin, and finally herself, lying on her back. She then ties the ends of the shawl, the one and being led over the right shoulder, the other under the left arm. Rising, she pushes the water skin into place before setting off. This is precisely the same procedure as is used when a woman places a corn stack on her back with the aid of a rope during the harvest.

---

372 *Fuel supply.* Fuel is scarce and is utilised extremely effectively. In the cookhouse, both the clay-
354 lined sunken earth oven and the semicircular cooking pits bordered by low clay walls are fed with whole branches fetched from the mountains. In the villages there was also a transportable form of these cooking pits[70]. The fuel consumption of both the earth oven and the cooking pits is very slight, and the embers are carefully removed and placed in the *samowar*. Of other forms of fuel there are [239] cakes of animal manure kneaded with straw and dried on the walls of the clay houses[71]. Cattle manure is collected in the fields and pastures by the women. Charcoal, which is used for the low, flat cooker pan, is a commercial commodity produced and sold by charcoal burners. Both in Sulaimani and in the villages there are petrol stoves to be found in bigger households, but in all these places fires and braziers are mainly used for cooking purposes.

---

132 *Heating.* During the time I was in Kurdistan, from May to September, it was summer with temper-
379 atures of up to 30°C (122°F.), so I had no opportunity of studying the heating of houses in the colder periods of the year. One cool morning in Serkan, a village of some altitude, a fire was lit in a low niche in the wall under a lean-to. This was all I experienced in the way of heating. For further particulars I must quote the reports of other travellers. Hay[72] states that: "In winter the main room is heated by an open fireplace in the centre; the smoke passes out (or does not, as the case may be) by a hole in the middle of the roof". Soane[73] refers to: "... a brazier of charcoal", and that "a stool under a quilt ... formed the "kirsi" which is the Kurdish method of keeping oneself warm". Nikitine[74] writes that: "En hiver, pour dormir, on place au-dessus de foyer un tabouret *(kursi)*, on le recouvre d'une couverture[75] et tout le monde se couche dessous ...".

7: Barth E-5 (1951) 1953 MA11 Kurd MA11

Chapter V.

The village scene

THE VILLAGE

The village, in its physical aspects, is fairly uniform over most of the South Kurdish area. The houses are built of mud, or rock in a mud mortar; the roofs are flat, held up by horizontal rafters — the most valuable item in the construction. Due to the nature of the architecture and the small size of available timber, the rooms of the houses tend to be quite small; pillars and posts are never used to support a longer span of roof. A second story on the building is rarely found. Frequently, there is no door with which to close the entrance, and never any glass in the windows. The windows are small and high up on the wall, the small room is always rather dark. There is no smoke-hole, the smoke from the fire on the hearth in the middle of the floor finds its way out through the entrance or the windows. The rooms are utterly devoid of furniture — the only contents of the room to which a visitor is shown is a tea samovar and some small glasses placed on an in-set shelf, and a roll of small rugs, mostly of felt, which are spread out on the floor to be sat on.

The number of rooms to a house varies, but is never very great, and must of course give accomodation to donkeys, cattle, and perhaps a horse, as well as to the people. To each house belongs a small courtyard, enclosed by a low wall. In winter, the house gives only